University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland
School of Business

Individual Report

Agile Business

Team 08 – Making Programming Sexy

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January 19, 2020

Individual Report

Master of Science in Business Information Systems

The goal of the project was to develop a proposal for a curriculum that would make technical informatic courses more attractive for students in the Business Information Technology degree program

This individual report contains a self-reflection about my role and contribution in this project and ends with a reflection highlighting my learnings during the entire project.

1. My project role

Within the team we first discussed how we want to distribute the roles. There was an ongoing discussion within the first two weeks whether we want to change the roles after each sprint. To run this project there was a need for a product owner and business analysts Having role rotations, would have given us the possibility to understand the effort and responsibilities required to fulfill the role of a product owner. However, in the discussion during the Sprint 1 Retro perspective, we noted that transferring knowledge among the team members is very time consuming and could lead to potential loss of knowledge. As we wanted to focus on the project objectives and given that changing roles from sprint to sprint is not a usual approach in real-life business, we decided to discard this approach.

I took over the role as a Business Analyst during the entire project. I shared this role together with my teammates Lawrence Morillo and Marc Fink.

To understand the role of a business analyst, I first revised the BABOK Guide to figure out what is required by a business analyst. As per BABOK a business analyst should concentrate on the activities around understanding company problems and goals, analyzing the needs and solutions, devising strategies, driving change, and finally also facilitating stakeholder collaboration.

To understand the current problems and the goals of the study program we first interviewed the project sponsor (Dr. Prof. Hinkelmann). After the first discussion we started to point out the problems and its root cause. We conducted some document analysis to get a proper understanding about the context. Furthermore, we also analyzed the gap between the current and future state situation. Afterwards we defined the stakeholders which we need to interview to gather further information. As a next step, we discussed and agreed on the approach how we want to conduct the elicitation phase and how to interact with the stakeholders. We performed initial interviews with students and professors. Out of these interviews we obtained useful information, which we then consolidated to get a proper understanding of the as-is situation and the current pain points. We then confirmed our outcome with a smaller amount of stakeholder (focus group with students) to ensure that the gathered information reflect the real situation. Out of this we created a first draft for a potential solution. After that we prepared and distributed a survey to broader audience (Lecturers and Students) to define the requirements for the future study program. The received feedback was consolidated and used as requirements. We again prepared a focus group discussion to confirm the requirements. Based on this information we started to design a potential scenario for a future study program. We introduced that solution to a small number of students for further discussion, which led to further refinements in our solution. We finally introduced this approach to project sponsor and presented our new study approach on pitching session to a broader audience.

2. My contribution

With regards to my contribution, I was involved in every phase. In the first phase to understand the current situation I went through the gathered documentation to get a proper understanding around the as-is situation. In a group discussion with the other business analysts I shared my understanding and aligned this with their understanding. We then documented the final output of discussion in our documentation.

I was also then involved in the interviews with the project sponsor and BSc Students and used my understanding from our documentation to further lead the discussions. Given that I am a former BSc BIT student also helped me to step into the shoes of the current students. We then created a first draft for a potential solution.

To gather the feedback from a broader audience I supported the team in the creation of a survey, which we then distributed to the lecturers and students. Based on the gathered feedback from the survey we defined the requirements for the potential solution in a spreadsheet. We confirmed these requirements with a focus group, where we discussed our outcome and their views on this. Finally, we then designed the new study approach, which we presented to the project sponsor and finally to a broader audience. During the entire project, I ensured that me and my teammates fulfilling the business analyst role have update our Kanban Board on Trello so that our Product Owner has a proper view around the pending tasks.

As mentioned in the beginning I was involved in almost every phase. The description above endorse this statement. A business analysts' contribution is required in each phase as he or she has the big picture around the context. In our project I shared this role with my teammates, and we contributed our skills from the beginning until to then end of this project.

3. My learnings

I am not working as a business analyst in my company. Therefore, the role as a business analyst was quite new to me. However, given that I am a former BSc BIT student the project context was quite familiar to me.

To understand the roles and responsibility of a business analyst, I revised the BABOK guideline. In my eyes, this guidance gives a very good understanding around this role.

During the project I used very often the BABOK guide to on the hand to figure out what is required from my side. On the other hand, it also helped me and my team to confirm whether our actions make sense in relation to the project goals. It also supported us to figure out which technique is most suitable during the different phases.

Strategy analysis

We used the insights from BABOK regarding strategy analysis on the start of our project. It helped us to define how we want to get the understanding around the current and future state of the project goal. We used the Brainstorming method for both states to get the inputs from every team member. Then we prioritized and focused on the inputs, which we rated with the most points. As this was the first phase where we started to work together for this project, we had sometimes discussions, where we noted that we somehow lost the focus on the current situation and started to talk about potential solutions It was good. that one of our group members stopped the discussion so that we could again focus on the problems before moving to the future state discussions. We also noted that not all tasks in BABOK was relevant to us. So, we only focused on that tasks which we agreed is most important to us.

Business analysis planning and monitoring

It helped me during the beginning phase, as this knowledge area supported me and my colleagues (Business analysts) how we want to approach the tasks for business analysis. Instead of starting the project without any plan, this knowledge area has supported us to create a first draft of a potential approach for this project. We then discussed our approaches and noted that sometimes we had different views. However, after having a look together on the techniques in BABOK we could decide on the final approach.

Also, in terms of how to define our stakeholder and how to approach them it was very useful and supported us to define the techniques how we can capture the stakeholder's inputs. Often, we also checked the BABOK guide to confirm whether our discussed approach makes sense.

Elicitation and collaboration

In my eyes the probably most important knowledge area for me and my colleagues working as business analysts. It helped us a lot to understand, how we want to gather information. The tasks and techniques described here supported us in the planning.

We noted already after the first interview with the students and the project sponsor that we really need to focus on the preparation and to use the most applicable technique to elicitate requirements. For me and Marc. it was quite difficult to be not biased while preparing the interview and survey questions. Here it was very good that we had Lawrence onboard, who informed us to be careful on this. Also, the discussion in the focus group to confirm our requirements was sometimes quite difficult as during these discussions we noted then new potential requirements, which we then again discussed internally how we want to consider them in our list of requirements.

Requirements lifecycle management

To trace, maintain and prioritise our requirements we used our lists of requirements as the central basis for this. We tracked them all in a spreadsheet. We tried to define key words for requirements and then to relate the received feedback to these key words. It also helped us to update and prioritise them after discussions with our stakeholder.

My biggest learning was that not everything mentioned by stakeholders needs to be documented and defined as requirements. However, it was quite difficult to me to figure out what to in-or exclude from our requirements lists.

Requirements analysis and design definition

This Knowledge Area supported us to design based on gathered requirements the new study program. Our list of requirements was the basis for this phase. In this phase I noted that we had several discussions around the potential solutions. Not everyone was happy with the solution as someone suggestions were not considered. However, after several discussions and changes on the solution we then agreed on the final solution.

Solution evaluation

As we only created a potential draft for a new study program, we could not analyze or measure how it works once introduced to the reality. However, we introduced our solution to different stakeholders (project sponsors, lecturers, students) and received generally positive feedback. Some inputs, we also tried to consider in the solution refinement.

General learning

I think having an agile approach in projects to achieve the goal is becoming more and more important. Too fast is our society changing and to provide quick and easy changes to projects and solutions becomes very important. I will try to consider this also in my future projects. It really helps to be agile and create quickly MVPs instead of working until to the project end and having the end product. It also supports to get immediate feedbacks from the stakeholders and to ensure that we are on the right way.

For me it was not always easy to think in Sprints. Often, I turned back to the traditional waterfall approach. However, after discussions with my teammates I could then change the mind set and work with the agile approach.

Something, where I really need to focus more is the definition of tasks and its granularity in our Kanban Board. Sometimes, we had tasks in our Backlog, which was good to know, however not necessary for a Kanban Board. Also updating the Kanban Board is very important as otherwise this Board would not make sense.

"*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.*
The important thing is not to stop questioning."

– Albert Einstein